Vol. 19. Numb 22.

The Athenian Mercury.

Saturday, *January* 11. 1695.

Queſt. 1. *FOR what reaſon does the Church of* England *obſerve the Feaſt of* Epiphany *or the Manifeſtation of Chriſt to the Gentiles on the twelfth day after* Chriſtmas? *Is it becauſe the* Wiſe Men *(as they are call'd in our Tranſlation) did make their Viſit at* Bethlehem *the* twelth day *after our Savior's birth, or becauſe the* ſtar *appear'd to 'em at that time in their own Country* ?

Anſw. In the firſt place it matters not whether the *preciſe time* either of the Stars appearing, or the wiſe men's coming to *worſhip* were the 12th day after our Savior's Birth, for which the Church does no where affirm, only ſaying in the Collect for this occaſion. 'O God, who by the leading of a ſtar, did manifeſt 'thy only begotten Son to the Gentiles, not adding [as at this time] as is uſual on other occaſions. However, they being the firſt fruits of the Gentiles, this revelation of our Saviour unto 'em was 'undoubtedly 'ſuch a Bleſſing as well deſerv'd to be ſolemnly and 'thankfully Commemorated; and for the exact time thereof, 'tis but a Circumſtance, which makes no alteration in the Nature of the thing.

But again, Dr. *Hammond* and others have obſerv'd from the ancients that the *Feaſt* of the *Nativity* it ſelf has been known by that name amongſt them, being often call'd *Epiphania*, and *Theophania*, the manifeſtation, or appearance, or rather *glorious appearance*, as 'tis often us'd in the Scripture, ſometimes indeed with the addition of δόξης, tho at others without it. Now this Feaſt of the *Nativity* being Celebrated *Twelve days* together, of which the firſt and the laſt, according to the cuſtom of the *Jews*, were the moſt *high* and *ſolemn*; each of 'em, he adds, might fitly be call'd *Epiphany* in that ſence, and tho not only referring to the ſtar, yet not excluding, but rather containing, nay, pointing at it as a ſpecial *Circumſtance* belonging to the *Nativity*.

However, we think it ſcarce poſſible that they ſhou'd make their offerings on the twelfth day after the Nativity the ſame year that Chriſt was born, becauſe *Mary's* purification ſeems to be over, which muſt have been, *one and forty days* after the Birth of the Child, *Lev.* 12. 4. At which purification ſhe was with her ſon, and preſented him publickly in the Temple, where both *Simeon* and *Anna* own'd him to be the *Meſſias*, on which 'tis added, he was ſpoken of to all thoſe that looked for Redemption in *Jeruſalem*, all which wou'd have made him ſufficiently publick, had it been after the wiſe men had allarm'd all *Jeruſalem* and receiv'd a charge from *Herod* concerning him: Not to add that if his going up to *Jeruſalem* and preſentation in the Temple had been after *Herod* was *mocked of the wiſe men*, 'twou'd have been no leſs than running him into certain deſtruction, beſides that immediately after *Joſeph* fled with him into *Egypt*. For which *reaſons*. It's much more probable as Dr. *Hammond* underſtands it, that the Foundation which makes the *Epiphany* the twelfth day from that of the *Nativity* muſt mean it of that *day twelvemonths* after.

Queſt. 2. *Where theſe* Magi *(as they are call'd by the* Greek *and* Latin) *Philoſophers, Kings, or Magitians?*

Anſw. They might have been all three together from the notation of the word, and the uſe on't among Authors both ſacred and profane, the famous *Perſian* Magi being all three together as St. *Jerom* has obſerv'd. There have been who have affirm'd that they were *three Kings*, ſome of the *Reguli* in *Arabia*, (like *Agabus*) and if they were not Kings, woe to this *Romiſh* Infallibility, which tells us, even where they are bury'd, and ſhows their Tombs at *Colen* with great Devotion. Notwithſtanding which honeſt *Mutian* was of another mind, tho he ſpeaks modeſtly, *Nec Reges, ut opinor, erant.* And if they were, they were very little ones, when their united bounty left *Joſeph* and *Mary* almoſt as poor as they found 'em. And here perhaps ſome wou'd be pleas'd to ſee their *Names*, but they have ſo many we know not what to call 'em, however take them all. The moſt common are *Gaſpar* or *Jaſpar*, *Melchior* and *Baltazar*. (They might as well have call'd 'em *Androgius*, *Tad*, and *Temantius*.) Others tell us their names were *Apellius*, *Amerus*, and *Damaſcus*. Others *Magalath*, *Galgalath* and *Saracin*, (by their hard names they ſhou'd be *Arabians*) others *Ator*, *Sator*, and *Peratoras*, which three names *Caſaubon* found in an old *Greek* Book, together with *Miſael*, *Achael*, *Cyriacus*, and *Stephanus*, the names of the 4 ſhepherds that came to viſit our Lord at *Bethlehem*, had been us'd in a charm to cure the biting of *Serpents* and other Venemous Creatures. But neither charm nor Legend can come up to that quickneſs of thought which is to be found in the *Roman Feſtival* on the *Epiphany*, 'Joſeph (ſay they) 'kept of the Gold to keep our Lady with while ſhe 'lay in Childbed (after her Purification, *vid. ſup.*) 'and with the *Myrrh*, our Lady anointed the Child 'to keep him from the worms, excellent Divinity, 'and moſt edifying *Commentators*?

A greater doubt there is whether they were *Magicians*, or only *Philoſophers*. The μάγος here, as a learned Man obſerves, anſwer'd to the *Hebrew* חרטם, whence by *Apheresis* the *Greek* ὁρτομ may very eaſily be deriv'd; and the ſame learned perſon, as well as moſt others are of opinion that 'tis not here to be taken for ſuch as profeſs'd Witchcraft and Conjuration, the word being frequently and notoriouſly us'd in a *good ſence* in profane Authors. But others anſwer with much probability, that the word is not once taken in ſuch a *good ſence* in Holy Scripture, but always for one that's guilty of *Sorcery* and *Witchcraft*: Of this opinion were ſeveral of the ancients, *Origen* and St. *Chriſoſtom* and others, and as many of our learned *Moderns*, *Beza*, *Lightfoot*, *Grotius*, &c. adding that this makes God's *Providence* more admirable, in bringing up the firſt fruits of the Gentiles from the very *Belly of Hell*. And what wonder if the *Eaſtern wiſemen* ſhou'd have been long ere this degenerated to theſe *ill Arts*, when they were in ſo fair a way for't, even in *Daniels* time, and when the *Jews* themſelves had ſo imitated the Idolatrous practices of the Heathen as to be generally *Magicians*, and *Joſephus* wou'd perſuade us that *Solomon* was one, and that he himſelf was not far from it.

Queſt. 3. *What Countrymen were they* ?

Anſw. We are only told in the Hiſtory, 'that they 'came from the *Eaſt* to *Jeruſalem*. Which ſeems to bid fair for their opinion who make 'em *Arabians*, ſince *Arabia* lay *Eaſt* of *Judæa*, and was ſufficiently infamous for thoſe *wicked Arts*, the antient *Zabii* living amongſt them, and beſides had plenty of all thoſe things which they preſented, *Gold*, *Myrrh*, and *Frankincenſe*: Whereas none of 'em were of the *natural growth* of *Perſia*, and tho they might, its true, procure them, yet they cou'd never wrench their Country ſo far to the *Eaſt* of *Judæa*, nor are they ever call'd *men of the Eaſt* as the *Arabians* frequently are in the ſacred writings, but always repreſented to the *North*, and their forces call'd the *Northern Army*. And therefore if they had Corn from any of thoſe Countrys it muſt have been ſaid. They came from the *North*, not from the *Eaſt* to *Jeruſalem*, whereas Paleſtine, as is notoriouſly known, and *Tacitus* obſerves, is bounded on the *Eaſt* by *Arabia*. Notwithſtanding

ſtanding which we muſt own many great men, as *Beza*, *Calvin*, *Scaliger*, *Petavius*, *Spankem*, and others, have brought them from *Perſia*, or *Chaldæa*, which latter is indeed ſomething *Eaſterly*, tho bending to the *North* of *Paleſtine*, and were near Neighbors to the *Sabeans*, in *Arabia*, (as both too mean to *Job*) and are thought the firſt founders of *Magic* as well as Idolatry, the old *Chaſdim* being doubtleſs well verſt in the *Biblioniij numeri*, mention'd by *Horace*, and *Chaldeans*, *Southſayers* and *Aſtrologers*, are read together in the Scriptures, and their Succeſſors to this day are more given to thoſe *Fooleries* then perhaps any other Nation in the World. But yet ſtill there are not wanting Authorities for placing 'em, as we have ſaid in *Arabia*; The Fathers uſed to interpret thoſe Texts, of 'The *Kings* of *Arabia* and *Saba* ſhall bring gifts (*molles ſua Thura, Sabæi*) as well as that other. 'To 'him ſhall be given of the Gold of *Arabia*, of this very *preſent*, as the latter part of that latter Text was eminently fulfill'd in our Saviour. 'Prayers ſhall be made unto him, and daily ſhall he be *praiſed*, both in the *ante-lucan* Hymns which the firſt Chriſtians did conſtanly *ſing*, *Chriſto Deo*, and in the preſent *Gloria Patri*, &c. But we ſhall inſtance in no more of 'em beſides *Epiphanius*, who cites it out of the Traditions of the Jews, as he's quoted by Dr. *Hammond*, 'that 'among the Gifts *Abraham* gave to the Sons of *Keturah*, were Gold *Frankincenſe* and *Myrrh*, and there-'fore, ſays he, their poſterity in *Magodia* a *Region* of 'Arabia, preſented the ſame Gifts to Chriſt at his 'Nativity. But where this *Magodia* ſhou'd be we confeſs we are at a loſs, unleſs there ſhou'd be ſome *reliques* of it in the *Magada* of *Ptolomy*, which he makes a City of *Meſopotamia*, ſome parts of which comes very near *Saba*, a lower *Baal* not far as it ſhou'd ſeem from *Balaams* habitation, who ſays he was fetcht from the Mountains of the *Eaſt* whoſe *ſucceſſors* ſome have thought theſe *Magi*. But of this more in the,

Queſt. 4. *Whether was it ordinary* ſtar, *or a Comet that appear'd to them, and how came they from the ſight of it to conclude* 'twas his ſtar, *who was born* King *of the* Jews?

Anſw. It ſeems to have been ſome *extraordinary appearance*, as will be made out under the next queſtion. Not only a *new Star*, or one which they had not before obſerv'd, which is not ſo very *rare* a thing among thoſe who are *exact obſervers* of the Heavens, but ſomething much more *auguſt* and *ſurprizing*, ſuch as till then they had never ſeen, and 'tis a pretty *Conjecture*, at leaſt, of a learned perſon, that the *Light* which appear'd to the ſhepherds, being afterwards form'd into a *Body*, was the ſame which theſe curious obſervers *ſaw* at a *diſtance*, and thought it ſome *new Star*. And ſomthing perhaps they might have heard of *Balaams* prophely a nobler piece of Poetry then any in *Homer*, and better deſerving to be carefully kept among 'em to after Ages. However that the *Jews* did about this time expect their *Meſſias*, or a *King* to be *born* among 'em, was then ſufficiently known, not only to *Herod*, who made uſe of it for his own Ambition, but even to the *Roman World*, and 'twou'd be ſtrange if it ſhou'd miſs inquiſitive men who were but their next *Neighbors*, *who* on the *appearance* of this *new Star*, which according to their Art did foreſhow the *Revolution* of *Empires*, and being alſo directed by the Spirit of God, did immediately conclude that this *Star*, which 'tis likely aroſe towards the Quarter of *Judea*, did point out unto 'em this wondrous expected Prince, the *deſire of all Nations*. Which will appear, we think, much more probable, when we have conſider'd the.

Queſt. 5. *Suppoſing this ſome extraordinary Star or appearance, how comes it not to be mention'd in any* Heathen Authors?

Anſw. Prophane writers are not the *Standard* of Truth to the *Scriptures*, but they to other Hiſtories. We have but very *dubious Inſtances*, that our Saviour himſelf was ever mention'd by the firſt *Heathen Writers*, and yet none but *madmen* will deny that there was *ever ſuch a perſon*. There are thouſands of remarkable paſſages without doubt, have really happen'd in the World, which yet are no where *recorded*, and others which have but a *ſingle Teſtimony*, far from being ſo authentic as this of St. *Matthews*, who writes in a plain and ſimple ſtile, and conceals not the *baſeneſs* of his former Employment. But what if we ſhou'd, after all this, have ſeveral *pregnant proofs* of ſuch a glorious and extraordinary *ſtar* about this time appearing even in *Heathen Authors*? Some indeed ſo full, that if any thing, it renders them ſuſpitious, as that in *Spankem*, out of *Chalcidius* in *Timæum*, a Heathen Author, who flouriſh'd not long after our Saviour who giving an account of ſome ſtrange Stars and their Remarkable Significations, has theſe memorable words. '*Eſt autem alia ſanctior, & venerabilior Hiſtoria*, &c. 'There is alſo a more *holy* and *venerable Hiſtory* (this Dr. *Hammond* underſtands of the Goſpel) which relates the Riſe of a certain Star, not Prognoſticating diſeaſes and *Death*, but the *Deſcent of a venerable* God [*ad humanæ converſationis*, ſays *Spankem's Copy*, but Dr. *Hammonds*, *humanæ ſervationis*,] for the *ſalvation* and benefit of mortals. *Quam a chaldæis obſervatam eſſe teſtantur qui deum nuper natum muneribus venerati ſunt*, as the Dr. not ſo large as *Spanhem*, which he tranſlates, 'which ſtar they teſtify (the Goſpel 'again) to have been obſerved by the *Chaldeans*, who 'came to this God which was *newly born*, and *worſhipt* 'and *preſented* him. But mayn't the *Teſtantur*, be as well or better referr'd to the, *Qui deum nuper natum*, &c. Which makes it fuller, as if the Magi were at that time *Living witneſſes* of the truth of this ſtrange *Phænomenon*? However that ſome extraordinary Star did about that time appear, we may learn from other Authors, and perhaps the, *Dionæi Ceſaris aſtrum*, might be the ſame, and belong to a *greater King*. but *Julian* himſelf is forc'd to confeſs the appearance of this *new Star* at our Saviours birth, tho he as *maliciouſly* as weakly attributes it to a certain Star which did ordinarily and naturally appear every 400 year. This *Spanhem* ſays is contrary to Experience and the Mathematicks, but his anſwer won't hold, for its now granted that Comets are no other, whoſe revolutions are ſo certain that they are now exactly calculated: The true reply, we think, is, that the Star appear'd, diſappear'd and mov'd in ſuch a manner as was above the ordinary power of nature, nay abſolutely contrary to it. For it went before 'em from *Jeruſalem* to *Bethlehem*, from *North* to *South*, and came at laſt and ſtood, (pointing down) exactly over the houſe where the *young Child* was. We ſhall cloſe this ſubject with a memorable paſſage of an antient Heathen Author, which ſeems to relate to this Star, and give a Diſcription of it. 'There appear'd, ſays he, a Comet, white, and ſhining with *Silver hair*, in ſuch a manner that 'twas ſcarce poſſible to behold it, and ſhowing the Effigies of a God in the ſhape of a Man.

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LONDON, Printed for John Dunton, at the *Raven* in Jewen-Street. 1695.